

Message Text

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ACTION SS-25

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FM AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI

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C O N F I D E N T I A L NEW DELHI 4555

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, IN, US

SUBJECT: FIRST IMPRESSIONS

1. I HAVE NOW COMPLETED THE INITIAL FORMALITIES EXPECTED OF AN AMBASSADOR HERE AND CAN REPORT THAT WHILE MY RECEPTION HAS BEEN WARM AND CORRECT, THE INDIANS ARE NOT TAKING PARTICULARLY GOOD CARE OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH THE US THESE DAYS.

2. NEEDLESS TO SAY, I COULD HAVE ARRIVED IN INDIA AT A BETTER TIME (I AGREE THAT IT WAS BEST THAT I WAIT OUT THE EARLY FIREWORKS IN BANGKOK). NEVERTHELESS, WITH THE PRESS CORPS LOOKING ON, THE GOVERNMENT OF INDIA VERY CAREFULLY ARRANGED MY PRESENTATION OF CREDENTIALS AND FIRST CALLS SO THAT THERE WAS NO CAUSE EVEN FOR SPECULATION THAT I WAS KEPT WAITING. I DELIBERATELY DECIDED TO AVOID DOING MUCH BUSINESS DURING MY TALKS WITH THE FOREIGN SECRETARY, THE DEPUTY FOREIGN MINISTER, THE FOREIGN MINISTER AND THE PRIME MINISTER. ONE OR TWO THINGS WERE OF SIGNIFICANCE, HOWEVER. WHEN I TALKED TO THE FOREIGN SECRETARY ON MARCH 5, I MENTIONED THE CONTROVERSY OVER INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES IN THE US AND SAID THAT THESE WERE BEING BROUGHT UNDER CONTROL. WITH INDIA IN MIND HE SAID THAT IT COULD HAPPEN THAT SOMETHING COULD BE DONE WHICH WAS NOT AUTHORIZED. I TOLD HIM THAT I INTENDED TO WATCH OVER ALL US ACTIVITIES IN INDIA AND CATEGORICALLY ASSURED HIM THAT THERE WOULD

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BE NO US INTERFERENCE IN INDIAN AFFAIRS. (I CERTAINLY

DON'T EXPECT THE ALLEGATIONS AGAINST US TO STOP BUT I DO INTEND CAREFULLY TO SUPERVISE OUR ACTIVITIES HERE AND HAVE ALREADY TAKEN STEPS TO AVOID AROUSING SUSPICIONS BY UNNECESSARY TRAVEL.)

3. ONE ASPECT OF MY CONVERSATION WITH THE FOREIGN MINISTER ON APRIL 1 ILLUSTRATES WHAT I MEAN BY THE INDIANS NOT TAKING MUCH CARE OF THEIR RELATIONS WITH US. MAKING CONVERSTATION, I SAID THAT I WAS PLEASED THAT THE PL 480 AGREEMENT HAD BEEN COMPLETED. CHAVAN WAS NOT EVEN AWARE OF THIS AND HAD TO ASK HIS MAN TEJA WHAT HAD HAPPENED. (THE INDIANS IN WASHINGTON TOLD US THAT THEY WOULD ISSUE A PRESS RELEASE IN NEW DELHI. THEY DIDN'T AND THE SIGNING DIDN'T GET MUCH ATTENTION IN THE PAPERS HEREM AS USUAL THE DIFFICULTIES IN THE NEGOTIATIONS GOT MUCH MORE.)

4. AS I HAVE ALREADY REPORTED, THE PRIME MINISTER SEEMED UNUSUALLY FRIENDLY (THE MOST IN MY VARIOUS CONVERSATIONS WITH HER). THERE WERE STILL THE LONG SILENCES. IT IS A CURIOUS GOVERNMENT IN WHICH NEITHER THE PRIME MINISTER NOR THE FOREIGN MINISTER SAY MUCH TO REPRESENTATIVES FOR FOREIGN GOVERNMENTS.

5. IT SHOULD BE OBVIOUS FROM WHAT I HAVE SAID SO FAR THAT MY OFFICIAL CONVERSATIONS HAVE DONE LITTLE TO GIVE ME A FEEL FOR THE SITUATION OUT HERE. BUT I HAVE, IN THE COURSE OF THE ORDINARY THINGS A NEW AMBASSADOR DOES, INCLUDING MY FIRST OFFICIAL VISITS TO BOMBAY AND MADRAS, DONE A LOT OF LISTENING TO INDIANS AND DIPLOMATIC COLLEAGUES. ALSO INDIA'S REMARKABLY FREE PRESS IS REVEALING. MY IMPRESSION IS THAT WHILE THE GOVERNMENT HERE WANTS TO PRESERVE A BASIS FOR A RELATIONSHIP WITH THE US WHICH WILL MAKE IT POSSIBLE FOR IT TO GET THE THINGS FROM US IT WANTS, IT ISN'T WORKING VERY HARD AT IT. IT IS TRUE THAT THE INDIANS MAY HAVE MADE SOME EFFORT TO CONTAIN THEIR REACTION TO OUR ARMS SALES POLICY, BUT I DISAGREE WITH WASHINGTON THAT THEIR REACTION HAS BEEN MODERATE. I BELIEVE THAT WASHINGTON MAY ALSO UNDERESTIMATE THE INTENSITY AND SERIOUSNESS OF THEIR CONCERN OVER THE POLICY. ANOTHER

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THING WHICH I HAVE NOTICED IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE INDIANS CONTINUE TO JOIN UP WITH THE RADICAL NONALIGNED AND IN THE PROCESS TAKE ISSUE WITH US. WHETHER AT HAVANA OR LIMA, THEY PREACH AN INTERNATIONAL SHARE THE WEALTH DOCTRINE WHICH WOULD DESTROY US ALL. I HOPE TO GOD THE EGYPTIANS DO NOT GET THEM INVOLVED INI WHE GENEVA TALKS ON PALESTINE.

6. GIVEN ALL OF THIS, I THOUGHT IT IMPORTANT THAT I START OUT HERE ON THE RIGHT FOOT. I COULD NOT POSSIBLY ACCEPT THIS DISREGARD FOR US INTERESTS. CONSEQUENTLY, WHEN I HAVE HAD OFFICIAL TALKS, I HAVE STUCK CAREFULLY TO PROTOCOL AND AVOIDED BUSINESS: OTHERWISE I WOULD HAVE HAD TO HAVE BEEN UNPLEASANT. I HAVE DELIBERATELY SOPKEN QUITE FRANKLY TO THE PRESS IN ORDER TO GET GREATER REALISM INTO OUR RELATIONS. I HAVE MADE IT CLEAR I WAS NOT HERE TO IMPROVE THE CLIMATE OF RELATIONS: I WAS HERE TO REPRESENT MY GOVERNMENT. I HAVE SAID THAT GOOD RELATIONS WERE A TWO-WAY STREET AND MADE IT CLEAR THAT THE INITIATIVE WAS THAT OF THE GOVERNMENT HERE. I ALSO POINTED OUT THAT INDIA PAYS IN THE US FOR ITS RADICAL ACTIONS WITH THE NONALIGNED (RECOGNITION OF THE PLO). IN SAYING SUCH THINGS, I HAVE TAKEN SOME HEAT IN THE PRESS AND FROM LEFTIST POLITICIANS. I EXPECTED THIS AND TAKE IT AS EVIDENCE THAT I HAVE BEEN HEARD.

7. ANOTHER IMPRESSION WHICH MAY BE WORTH REPORTING IS THE EXTENT TO WHICH THE US IS BLAMED FOR INDIA'S AND THE WORLD'S ILLS. THERE IS A FASCINATION WITH THE US IN INDIA AND OUR DIFFICULTIES AROUND THE WORLD ARE REPORTED IN DETAIL AND FREQUENTLY WITH SATISFACTION. THE CHORUS ON THE CIA HAS BUILT UP AGAIN AND WE ARE ACCUSED OF EVERYTHING FROM PLOTTING THE MURDER OF INDIAN OFFICIALS TO SUPPORTING JAYAPRAKASH NARAYAN IN HIS AGITATION AGAINST MRS. GANDHI. IN FAIRNESS, MOST OF THIS COMES FROM THE IRRESPONSIBLE PAPERS AND LEFTIST POLITICIANS BUT ON OCCASION A STATE POLITICAL LEADER OR A CONGRESS PARTY OFFICIAL CHIMES IN. THIS WILL PROBABLY INCREASE UNTIL MRS. GANDHI HOLDS ELECTIONS IN THE NEXT 8-12 MONTHS.

8. ALL OF THIS CONVINCES ME THAT LIFE IS GOING TO BE
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SLOW IN NEW DELHI FOR A WHILE. I DON'T INTEND ANY INITIAVITES TO SPEED IT UP: THAT IS FOR THE INDIANS. I AM QUITE PREPARED TO TAKE IT EASY FOR A WHILE.
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